

## Three Deadly Dangers - Acts 16:16-24 – July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008

- In Acts chapter 16, Paul, with Silas, Timothy, and Luke, begins this, his second missionary journey to the continent of Europe.
- He has just led a wealthy and successful businesswoman by the name of Lydia to Christ along with her family and employees as well.
- Now, by contrast, instead of a cultured lady, it's a captive slave that gets saved, and it's going to get Paul and Silas thrown in jail.
- What's interesting is that the jailer will be the third one to get saved. The first was Lydia, and the second is this demon possessed girl.

- Paul, on this missionary journey, seems to be directed by the Holy Spirit to people of all walks of life who need the Lord.
- It seems that the Holy Spirit dealt with a tender soul, now a tormented soul, and then He deals with the tough soul right where they live."

"Luke records three specific conversions at Philippi, and each one is a contrast. Taken together they give an interesting study in the power of the gospel to save people from widely differing backgrounds and ways of life."

John Phillips "Exploring Acts, Volume 2, p. 324

- Today's text is not only a teaching about how God can save anyone, but how the enemy does everything to stop it from happening.
- Satan is the "father of lies," "author of confusion," and the "accuser of the brethren," and always tries to thwart God's plan for salvation.
- It's interesting how the dangers they faced then, are very similar to the dangers we face in the world today, hence the title.

- Paul and his missionary team are on dangerous ground in this front line fight to get the Gospel to the ends of the earth.
- Satan is "hell-bent," as it were, to keep this from happening, and as we see here in our text, will use certain devices to accomplish it.
- I suppose one of the reasons we have this account in Acts is to show us how Satan operates so we won't be ignorant of those devices.

### 1. A fascination with the spirit world (Verses 16-18)

16 Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. 17 This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." 18 She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.

v16 On the way to prayer they meet a slave girl who had earned large amounts of money for her owners with her demonic fortune telling.

v17 She follows them satanically shouting; "these men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved."

v18 She keeps doing this for several days until Paul was so troubled that he commands the spirit to leave her in Jesus name and it does!

F.F. Bruce translates the phrase with: "*It came out there and then.*" He comments: "The words had scarcely left his lips when she was released from its power."

- Does this mean that demons can predict the future? No, but they can predict human behavior, and know the scriptures and the Gospel.

One commentator answered it this way; "while demons are created beings, not 'gods' themselves, we surmise that they can not read minds, nor actually foretell the future. But they can read and predict human behavior, and can attempt to steer events towards a previously predicted conclusion."

- Why does Paul let this go on for days? Perhaps he was waiting for the Holy Spirit to give him the green light to cast the demon out.
- Why does Paul cast the demon out when she was actually telling the truth about him? It's because of the messenger not the message.
- The mission and the message of Paul was true by the Holy Spirit, however, the source of the testimony was false from an evil spirit.

"Satan used her as the means of deceiving the people. The unclean spirit pretended to praise Paul and his friends, either with the view of puffing them up with pride, or to disgust the better sort of people by leading them to identify the gospel with the ravings of the maniac girl. Much money was paid to this poor woman by superstitious persons for her soothsaying, just as at this day the ungodly will pay much for the telling of their fortunes..."

Charles Spurgeon

- It's also likely that Paul had compassion on the girl who was being used by evil and greedy men who were taking advantage of her.
- Another reason is that this girl was known for her demonic possession and fortune telling, and she would have confused people.
- Jesus did the same thing when he often told demons to be silent, even when they were telling the truth about Him.

**Matthew 8:28-34** 28 When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. 29 "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?" 30 Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding. 31 The demons begged Jesus, "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs." 32 He said to them, "Go!" So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water. 33 Those tending the pigs ran off, went into the town and reported all this, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. 34 Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region. NIV

- So Paul and Silas get thrown into jail for casting out demons, and Jesus gets thrown out of town for casting out demons.

- Let's start connecting some dots now: "How does their encounter with this demon possessed girl then, apply to us now?"
- The fact that this girl made her owners so rich indicates that people were fascinated by her as they were with the spirit world.
- I personally believe that today's fascination with the spirit world is one of the most deadly dangers we face, even as Christians.

- A couple of years ago at a Calvary Chapel Senior Pastor's Conference, Greg Laurie made a comment that stunned me.
- He stated that Oprah Winfrey has more influence on America than any pastor could ever hope to have because of her popularity.
- He went on to say that he believes that she is actually "America's Pastor," by virtue of how she influences the masses.

**The Berean Call - "Oprah and Friends" To Teach Course on New Age Christ** [Excerpts] by Warren Smith - Oprah Winfrey will be letting out all the stops ...Beginning January 1, 2008, "Oprah & Friends" will offer a year-long course on the New Age teachings of A Course in Miracles. A lesson a day throughout the year will completely cover the 365 lessons from the Course in Miracles "Workbook." For example, Lesson #29 asks you to go through your day affirming that "God is in everything I see." Lesson #61 tells each person to repeat the affirmation "I am the light of the world." Lesson #70 teaches the student to say and believe "My salvation comes from me." By the end of the year, "Oprah & Friends" listeners will have completed all of the lessons laid out in the Course in Miracles Workbook. Those who finish the Course will have a wholly redefined spiritual mindset—a New Age worldview that includes the belief that there is no sin, no evil, no devil, and that God is "in" everyone and everything. A Course in Miracles teaches its students to rethink everything they believe about God and life. The Course Workbook bluntly states: "This is a course in mind training" and is dedicated to "thought reversal."

<http://www.thebereancall.org/node/6213>

## 2. The love of money (Verses 19-21)

19 When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. 20 They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar 21 by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."

v19 When her greedy owners realized "that their hope of making money was gone," they arrest and take Paul and Silas to the authorities.

v20 They bring them before the civil authorities and tell them that they are Jews and are creating an uproar in this "their" city.

v21 Because of "their love for money," they not only attack them as Jews, but they falsely accuse them of breaking Roman laws.

**1 Timothy 6:10a** For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. NIV

- Where is Timothy and Luke, why is it just Paul and Silas that get arrested? Paul and Silas were Jews not Luke and Timothy.

Luke was a Gentile, and Timothy was only half Jewish. Paul and Silas *looked* Jewish, and "Anti-Jewish sentiment lay very near the surface in pagan antiquity." F.F. Bruce

- I believe they were using the fact that Paul and Silas were Jews against them because they had taken away their source of income.
- The real evil is their love for money. If their money had not been affected by what Paul did, this wouldn't be happening.
- This statement, at first, may be hard to get your mind around: "loving money is at the root of the evils like pornography and abortion."

## 3. The godlessness in the courts (Verses 22-24)

22 The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten.

23 After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully.

24 Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

v22 The crowd joins in the attack against Paul and Silas and as a result the authorities have them stripped and beaten.

v23 After this "severe" flogging, they are thrown into prison and the jailer is commanded to guard them carefully.

v24 When they receive these orders, they have Paul and Silas put in the inner cell with stocks chained around their feet.

One Bible commentator puts it this way: "In Jewish legal tradition, there was a maximum number of blows that could be delivered when beating a person, but the Romans had no such limit. We can rest assured Paul and Silas were severely beaten. Paul would later write of his ministry: '*In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.*' (2 Corinthians 11:23). Even in their pain, God was not far from Paul and Silas."

"These stocks had more than two holes for legs, which could thus be forced apart in a such a way as to cause the utmost discomfort and cramping pain." F.F. Bruce

Tertullian said, "The legs feel nothing in the stocks when the heart is in heaven."

"So ended a day which began with a miracle; but Satan's brief victory was in a few hours turned into total defeat. Glory be to God, saints may be beaten, but they conquer still."

Charles Spurgeon

- What's interesting about this is that this happens to them all because of a corrupt and godless court decision siding with evil agenda's.
- I believe that the godless decisions made by the courts today are one of the greatest dangers we face as a nation and as a church.

### Concluding thoughts

1. Like with the demon possessed girl it doesn't matter who I am Jesus loves me, and I need Him to deliver and save me as only He can.
2. Demons know God and the scriptures in some ways more than I do, but in the power of Jesus' name I am more powerful than them.
3. People's problems are chiefly spiritual, not social, as with the demon possessed girl who was a slave. Paul didn't deal with "slavery."
4. We shouldn't be surprised that when money is involved, the law will seemingly protect evil because evil is rooted in the love of money.
5. The hatred of Jews validates the Jews as God's chosen people. Even then, only Paul and Silas, who are Jews, are jailed.

- Satan demonically possessed this Pharaoh to kill all the new born males by having them thrown into the alligator infested Nile.
- Satan demonically possessed Haman to get the King to issue an edict so as to destroy all the Jews in the book of Esther.
- Satan demonically possessed King Herod to have all the boys killed so as to wipe out Jesus who had just been born.
- Satan demonically possessed Adolph Hitler to mercilessly murder over six million Jews in the Holocaust of the last century.
- Satan demonically possessed Mahmoud Ahmadinejad who is currently planning to destroy Israel and wipe her off the map.

6. I will be persecuted proportionate to my profession of faith and godly life by virtue of how I pose a threat to the powers of darkness.

**2 Timothy 3:12** Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. KJV